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New report shows oncology and chemotherapy best rated among outpatient services

The Bureau of Health Information (BHI) has today released the results of a survey of more than 18,000 people who received outpatient services in NSW public hospitals, allowing people's experiences of different types of outpatient services to be compared for the first time.

BHI's latest *Snapshot Report* shows that while most outpatients said that overall, their care was 'very good', this ranged from 62% of people who received orthopaedic and other surgical services to 84% of those who visited a hospital as an outpatient for an oncology or chemotherapy appointment.

BHI Chief Executive, Dr Jean-Frederic Levesque said the report shows significant variation in patients' experiences depending on the type of outpatient services they said they received.

"Overall, oncology and chemotherapy patients were the most positive about their experience, while orthopaedic and other surgical patients rated their care least positively," said Dr Levesque.

"Some aspects of how patients experience care will vary according to the health problems they have and the treatments they receive. But the report shows differences in aspects of patient experiences where they should not vary — such as privacy, politeness and courtesy, being informed about medication side effects and receiving clear explanations about their treatment."

Five in ten orthopaedic patients said they 'always' saw health professionals wash their hands before touching them and six in ten said their care was 'very well organised', whereas for oncology and chemotherapy patients these figures rose to eight in ten for each measure.

Timely access to outpatient care was also a challenge for patients who received some types of services. For example, one in five ophthalmology patients said they waited longer than six months to get an appointment. One in three said that their wait time was too long. Once they got to the clinic, one in four waited over an hour for their appointment to start.

The report shows some aspects of care were rated consistently well across all nine types of outpatient services. For example, almost all patients said they were able to get a convenient appointment time, and said their cultural and religious beliefs were respected.

In addition, some aspects of care were rated consistently lower across different types of outpatient services. Most patients said they had problems finding parking, and less than half said their appointment started on time and that they 'definitely' felt involved in their own treatment plan.

"Listening to what patients have to say about the accessibility and the quality of outpatient care is crucial to focus efforts on where improvements can be made," Dr Levesque said.

Outpatients are people who visit hospital for appointments but are not admitted, and each year around seven million outpatient visits are made to NSW public hospitals.

The *Snapshot Report*, as well as full results for all types of services and for individual local health districts on BHI's interactive data portal Healthcare Observer, are available at www.bhi.nsw.gov.au

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